

Message Text

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ORIGIN OPIC-06

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 CIEP-01

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DRAFTED BY OPIC/F BRDUFFY

APPROVED BY EB/IFD/ OIA:RJSMITH

OPIC/F:PMCCALLUM

AF/S:RPERRY

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TO AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY

INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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E.O. 11652:

TAGS: EFIN

SUBJECT: SODA ASH

1. ROBERT HOLT, VICE PRESIDENT, EXPLORATION, AND KEITH EVANS, MANAGER, SPECIAL PROJECTS, BOTH OF GULF RESOURCES AND CHEMICALS CORPORATION, VISITED WASHINGTON DECEMBER 11-12 TO DISCUSS PROGRESS OF SUA PAN PROJECT AND POTENTIAL INTEREST OF OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN SERIES OF MEETINGS OPIC HAD SCHEDULED.

2. AFTER BRIEF MORNING MEETING AT OPIC, HOLT AND EVANS TOGETHER WITH TWO OPIC REPRESENTATIVES MET WITH STATE
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DEPARTMENT DESK AND COMMERCIAL OFFICERS FOR BOTSWANA.

MEETING INCLUDED GENERAL DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL TRENDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITION IN BOTSWANA, AND THE BOTSWANAN INVESTMENT CLIMATE. HOLT AND EVANS PLEASED WITH STATE DEPARTMENT BRIEFING BUT FELT MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION WILL BE REQUIRED BEFORE FINAL DECISION MADE. VISIT OF GULF RESOURCES PRESIDENT ALLEN MAY CLARIFY THESE CONCERNS.

3. FOLLOWING THIS MEETING, GULF AND OPIC REPRESENTATIVES VISITED WORLD BANK TO BRIEF SIX OFFICERS THERE ON PROJECT

PROPOSAL. BANK OFFICERS WERE FAMILIAR WITH PREVIOUS AMAX INVOLVEMENT AND WERE ENCOURAGED BY GULF RESOURCES' DECISION TO CONSTRUCT A PILOT OPERATION. BANK OFFICER ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT HOLT CONTACT JAPANESE CONSORTIA INTERESTED IN LAKE NATRON SODA ASH FACILITY. THIS CONSUMER GROUP MAY HAVE MARKET OF UP TO 1,000,000 TONS OF SODA ASH/ YEAR. WORLD BANK STILL WAITING FOR FIGURES ON INFRA-STRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS FROM GOVERNMENT OF BOTSWANA. UNTIL THAT TIME NO DECISION ON LEVEL OF FINANCING OR POSSIBLE TERMS (I.E. PARENT COMPANY GUARANTEES) CAN BE EXPECTED.

4. LATE AFTERNOON SESSION HELD AT BOTSWANA EMBASSY WITH AMBASSADOR DAMBE OFFERING HIS ASSISTANCE--HE SEEMED CONVINCED THAT GULF WAS SERIOUS AND MOVING AHEAD.

5. FRIDAY MEETINGS INCLUDED SESSIONS AT EXIM BANK AND IFC. BOTH ORGANIZATIONS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL ALTHOUGH EXIM BANK OFFICER SUGGESTED CONCERN THAT INFRA-STRUCTURE COSTS MAY BE PROHIBITIVE FOR SIZE OF PROJECT.

6. GULF RESOURCES VERY PLEASED WITH RECEPTION AND INTEREST IN THE PROJECT AND ASKED OPIC FOR OUR ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE VISIT BY ALLEN. OPIC AGREES SUCH VISIT SHOULD BE MORE A GENERAL OBSERVATION THAN OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE SPECIFICS. DECONTROL FOLLOWING 12/31/76. ROBINSON

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